

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5276
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USBERLIN UNN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BERLIN 6565

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GE, XA
SUBJECT: SIGNS OF AN INCREASING GDR ROLE IN AFRICA

SUMMARY: RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH AFRICAN SPECIALISTS
IN GDR MFA AND AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN EAST BERLIN
CONFIRM AN INCREASING GDR ROLE IN AFRICA DURING THE
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PAST YEAR. TRADITIONALLY MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONS
WITH ALGERIA, MOZAMBIQUE, ANGOLA, GUINEA BISSAU,
AND TANZANIA, THE GDR NOW APPEARS TO BE CONCENTRATING ON
ETHIOPIA. GDR OFFICIALS ADMIT GDR INTERESTS
IN ETHIOPIA ARE POLITICAL, NOT ECONOMIC, AND EXPRESS
SUPPORT FOR THE MENGISTU GOVERNMENT AGAINST SOMALIA AND
THE ERITREAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT. GDR OFFICIALS ALSO

POINT TO GDR ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN NIGERIA AND ZAIRE, AND DENY MOBUTU'S ACCUSATION OF DIRECT GDR INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHABA REBELLION. GDR APPEARS TO BE CONCNETRATING ON ECONOMIC AND MEDICAL AID TO AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND ON THE TRAINING OF AFRICAN STUDENTS AND OFFICERS IN THE GDR. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A CALL AT THE GDR MFA JULY 21, CHARGE AND EMBOFF DISCUSSED GDR POLICIES TOWARD AFRICA WITH AMBASSADOR BOETTCHER, HEAD OF THE MFA NORTH AND WEST AFRICA DIVISION, AND AMBASSADOR HOLLAENDER, DEPUTY HEAD OF THE MFA EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION. ALSO PRESENT WAS A HASTILY IDENTIFIEID GDR AFRICAN EXPERT WHO DID NOT PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE DISCUSSION. BOTH BOETTCHER AND HOLLAENDER CLAIMED TO HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN AFRICA, BOETTCHER HAVING SERVED AS THE GDR'S FIRST AMBASSADOR IN ZAIRE AND MOST RECENTLY IN CAMEROON, HOLLAENDER HAVING SERVED AS GDR AMBASSADOR TO TANZANIA.

2. BOETTCHER BEGAN BY NOTING THAT THE GDR CURRENTLY HAD DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH 46 AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THE GDR MAINTAINED 22 EMBASSIES IN AFRICA, WHILE THERE WER 11 AFRICAN EMBASSIES IN EAST BERLIN. BOETTCHER CITED HIS OWN 20 YEARS OF EXPERICENE AS A GDR DIPLOMAT IN AFRICA AS AN EXAMPLE OF A LONG TRADITION OF GDR CONTACTS WITH THE CONTINENT. HE SAID THAT A CONFIDENTIAL

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LARGE PERCENTAGE OF GDR MID-LEVEL DIPLOMATS HAD GAINED THEIR INITIAL EXPERIENCE IN AFRICA AT A TIME WHEN THE GDR WAS NOT RECOGNIZED BY MOST COUNTRIES.

3. BOETTCHER SAID THAT THE GDR PLACED A HIGH PRIORITY ON SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. IT ATTEMPTED TO HELP ACCORDING TO ITS POTENTIAL, BUT HAD USUALLY BEEN ASKED TO DO MORE THAN ITS RESOURCES WOULD ALLOW. HE POINTED TO A WIDE RANGE OF CONTACTS WITH COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE GDR HAD GOOD RELATIONS SUCH AS ALGERIA, MOZAMBIQUE, ANGOLA, GUINEA BISSAU, AND TANZANIA. HE REFERRED TO FREQUENT EXCHANGES BETWEEN MASS ORGANIZATION AND YOUTH GROUPS, AND IN A CASE IN POINT NOTED 100 GDR YOUTHS HAD JUST RETURNED FROM AN OFFICIALS VISIT TO ALGERIA, IN ADDITION, INCREASING NUMBERS OF AFRICAN STUDENTS WERE STUDYING IN THE GDR. REGARDING GDR AID TO AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, BOETTCHER CLIMAED THA THE GDR SENT PRIMARILY MEDICAL AID, FOOD AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. ON OCCASION, WOUNDED SOLDIERS WERE BROUGHT TO EAST BERLIN FOR TREATMENT.

4. BOETTCHER SAID THA THE GDR SOUGHT ECONOMIC RELATIONS NOT JUST WITH THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH WERE PURSUING A "SOCIALIST ORIENTATION", BUT ALSO WITH THOSE TAKING A CAPITALIST DIRECTION. BOETTCHER CITED POLITBURO MEMBER LAMBERZ' VISIT TO NIGERIA AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE GDR'S BALANCED APPROACH. WHILE THE GDR HAD NOT PLANS TO IMPORT NIGERIAN OIL, BOETTCHER SAID, IT WAS INTERESTED IN CACAO AND PALM OIL. AS WITH OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES, THE GDR SOUGHT A DIRECT BARTER TRADE RELATIONSHIP WITH NIGERIA TO WHOM IT EXPORTED CEMENT AND MACHINES. IN GENERAL, THE GDR SOUGHT CACAO, CITRUS FRUITS, AND RAW MATERIALS FROM AFRICA. BOETTCHER LAMENTED THAT THE GDR HAD LITTLE CHANCE OF EXPANDING TRADE RAPIDLY WITH NIGERIA DUE TO WEST EUROPEAN COMPETITION.

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5. BOETTCHER CITED ZAIRE AS ANOTHER COUNTRY WHERE THE GDR HAD POTENTIAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS. THE GDR WANTED COPPER FROM ZAIRE, AND HAD DEVELOPED ITS ECONOMIC TIES SLOWLY, THOUGH NOT TO THE LEVEL OF ITS TRADE WITH NIGERIA BEFORE ZAIRE SUSPENDED RELATIONS IN EARLY 1977. BOETTCHER NOTED THAT TRADE WAS CONTINUING DESPITE THE SUSPENSION, AND ZAIREAN STUDENTS WERE STILL STUDYING IN THE GDR. ALGERIA WAS PROTECTING THE GDR'S INTERESTS IN KINSHASHA, WHILE THE TUNESIANS HAD BEEN ASKED TO REPRESENT ZAIRE IN EAST BERLIN, BUT HAD NOT YET AGREED.

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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6. BOETTCHER -- AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED -- DENIED MOBUTU'S ALLEGATION THAT THE GDR HAD INVOLVED ITSELF DIRECTLY IN THE SHABA REBELLION BY SENDING MUNITIONS AND ADVISERS. HE STATED FIRMLY THAT NEITHER THE GDR NOR THE CUBANS WERE AS INCOMPETENT AS MOBUTU HAD MADE THEM OUT TO BE IN HIS ACCUSATIONS. THE PHOTO OF GDR MUNITIONS USED AS EVIDENCE COULD HAVE BEEN TOUCHED UP, OR THE MUNITIONS
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COULD HAVE REACHED SHABA INDIRECTLY THROUGH A THIRD PARTY BEYOND THE GDR'S CONTROL. REGARDING THE SEVEN JOURNALISTS ARRESTED IN SHABA, BOETTCHER NOTED THAT THE THREE ALLEGED CUBANS TURNED OUT TO BE SPANISH CORRESPONDENTS THERE ILLEGALLY, WHILE OF THE FOUR ALLEGED GDR CORRESPONDENTS, ONE HAD PROVEN TO BE BRITISH, AND THE OTHER THREE WERE ALSO THERE ILLEGALLY. BOETTCHER SAID THE GDR HAD NO RECORD OF ANY GDR CITIZENS MISSING IN ZAIRE, WHICH REFUTED MOBUTU'S CHARGES. BOETTCHER CLAIMED THAT MOBUTU HAD USED THE GDR AS A SCAPEGOAT TO WARN THE SOVIETS AND DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM ZAIRE'S SERIOUS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. HE SAID THAT THE GDR WAS READY TO RESUME FULL RELATIONS AT ANY TIME, BUT THE NEXT STEP WAS UP TO ZAIRE.

7. BOETTCHER AND HOLLAENDER EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIA IN ITS CONFLICT WITH SOMALIA AND THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FORCES. THE WHOLE SITUATION AS A "TRAGEDY", BOETTCHER LAMENTED AND THE GDR WANTED TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH SIDES IN THE NAME OF ORDER AND STABILITY ON THE AFRICAN HORN. BOETTCHER SAID THE

GDR AGREED WITH THE OAU RESOLUTION WHICH URGED AFRICAN STATES TO SET ASIDE BORDER PROBLEMS UNTIL MORE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION, PARTICULARLY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WERE RESOLVED. BOETTCHER OPINED THAT THE ERITREAN MOVEMENT HAD BEEN PROGRESSIVE AS LONG AS HAILE SELASSIE WAS IN POWER, BUT WAS NOW ENDANGERING A YOUNG AND PROGRESSIVE GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS.

8. BOETTCHER ADMITTED TO EXPANDING GDR CONTACTS WITH THE MENGISTU GOVERNMENT, OF WHICH LAMBERZ' VISIT PROVIDED THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE. WHEN ASKED WHY LAMBERZ HAD VISITED ADDIS AND NOT MOGADISCIO ON HIS TRIP
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BOETTCHER SAID THAT SOMALIA VISIT WAS NOT NECESSARY SINCE STOPH HAD BEEN THERE RECENTLY. HE ALSO IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT LAMBERZ HAD NOT RECEIVED AN INVITATION FROM THE SOMALIS. BOETTCHER SAID THAT THE GDR'S INTEREST IN ETHIOPIA WAS ENTIRELY POLITICAL AT THIS POINT. THOUGH THE GDR HAD CONSIDERED IMPORTING ETHIOPIAN COFFEE, IT HAD FOUND THE ETHIOPIAN PRODUCT LESS SATISFACTORY THAN THE COFFEE IT WAS IMPORTING FROM LATIN AMERICA, AND THUS HAD NOT YET BEGUN BUYING OR BARTERING FROM THE ETHIOPIANS. (THIS IS, OF COURSE, CONTRARY TO INFO CONTAINED IN ADDIS ABABA'S 4363.)

9. BOETTCHER EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WOULD EVENTUALLY WIN IN ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA, BUT WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR SOUTH AFRICA. HE PREDICTED THAT AFRICA WOULD REMAIN THE PRINCIPAL THEATRE OF EAST-WEST TENSIONS IN THE THIRD WORLD FOR SOME TIME TO COME BECAUSE OF EUROPE'S NEED FOR MARKETS AND RAW MATERIALS.

10. COMMENT BOETTCHER AND HOLLAENDER FREELY ADMITTED THE GDR'S INCREASING FOCUS ON AFRICA DURING THE PAST YEAR, AS WELL AS THE GDR'S CURRENT EMPHASIS ON ITS RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. THEY TRIED TO PORTRAY THE GDR AS SUPPORTING NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WHERE THESE HAD A CHANCE OF SUCCESS, BUT WILLING TO DEAL WITH WESTERN-ORIENTED AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. WHILE THE GDR'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN AFRICA ARE STILL DEVELOPING AND DO NOT SEEM SIGNIFICANT AT THIS POINT, THE GDR'S INTEREST IN NIGERIA AND ZAIRE FOR RAW MATERIALS WAS EVIDENT FROM THIS CONVERSATION.

11. IN RECENT WEEKS WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH MOST OF THE ELEVEN AFRICAN AMBASSADORS IN EAST BERLIN AND HAVE FOUND THEM FRUSTRATED IN THEIR LACK OF PRECISE INFORMATION ON THE GDR'S EXACT ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA.

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THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING THAT THE GDR HAS BEEN ASSIGNED
A MAJOR ROLE BY THE SOVIETS IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS, AND
THAT ITS PRINCIPAL FOCUS THUS FAR HAS BEEN IN MOZAMBIQUE
ANGOLA, GUINEA BISSAU AND NOW INCREASINGLY IN ETHIOPIA, EVEN
AT THE EXPENSE OF THE GDR'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA.
MOST BELIEVE THAT THE GDR HAS CONCENTRATED ON ECONOMIC
AND MEDICAL AID THUS FAR WAS WELL AS ON THE TRAINING
OF AFRICAN STUDENTS AND OFFICERS IN THE GDR. END COMMENT.
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